CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 14 MARCH 2000 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BELARUS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON HUMANITARIAN DE-MINING AND MINE STOCKPILE ELIMINATION, WHICH WAS HELD IN MINSK ON 6 AND 7 MARCH 2000

I have the honour to transmit to you information about the International Workshop on Humanitarian De-mining and Mine Stockpile Elimination, which was held in Minsk on 6 and 7 March 2000.

I would be grateful if you would take the necessary steps to ensure that the attached information is distributed as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament to all delegations of the member States and observers in the Conference.

(Signed) Syargei Mikhnevich
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Deputy Permanent Representative

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On March 6-7, 2000, the International Workshop on Humanitarian De-mining and Mine Stockpile Elimination was held in Minsk, Belarus. Delegates from Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Russian Federation, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United States of America, International Committee of the Red Cross and the Secretariat of the United Nations participate in workshop. Broad-ranging and result-oriented discussions were aimed at accurately defining the scope of the landmine problem, developing possible solutions and identifying international resources that could be made available to assist the Republic of Belarus in its de-mining and mine stockpile elimination activities.

On the basis of the data, provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Belarus, workshop participants received clear evidence that:

• having been a mine-affected country during two world wars, the Republic of Belarus fully shares all mine-related humanitarian concerns of international community;

• the Republic of Belarus supports the goal of prohibiting use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines;

• the Republic of Belarus does not produce anti-personnel mines;

• in 1995 the Republic of Belarus signed a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines which now enjoys a de-facto international recognition; it has been extended by Belarus to the end of 2002;

• the Republic of Belarus still suffers the consequences of World War II; a lot of unexploded ordinances, including anti-personnel mines, still kill and maim civilian population;

• the Republic of Belarus faces a severe problem of eliminating a huge stockpile of anti-personnel landmines left in the country after the break-up of the Soviet Union;

• the Republic of Belarus requests international assistance to conduct further demining and stockpile elimination. Assistance is required to meet the high costs involved and the lack of financial resources and relevant technologies;

• Because of financial problems the Republic of Belarus is not ready at present to join the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction but resolves to consider to join at some time in the future;

• the Republic of Belarus will consider becoming a Party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction after de-mining and stockpile elimination activities with international financial and technological assistance has been provided;

• the Republic of Belarus is ready to begin de-mining and stockpile elimination cooperation with any interested party and welcomes any related proposals and initiatives.

The Republic of Belarus appeals to the international community, including governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations, to assist the Republic of Belarus in its de-mining and stockpile elimination activities. The Republic of Belarus welcomes related technical, technological and financial assistance as well as assistance to victims and in establishing and implementing mine awareness programs.

Workshop participants express an opinion that the framework of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction creates the most favorable circumstances for States Parties to receive financial and technical assistance from international community.

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